



Reducing the risk of zoonotic disease transmission between people and wildlife in east-central Africa: Gorilla Doctors' Employee Health Program

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Background

- Non-human primates are important sources of zoonotic pathogens
- Non-human primates, especially great apes, are susceptible to human pathogens
- Endangered mountain and Grauer's gorillas survive in the most densely populated part of continental Africa
- Human-habituated gorillas are in close contact with people daily



Gorilla Doctors implements a preventive health care program for park workers and their family members in Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo to mitigate the potential for bidirectional disease transmission between people and gorillas.

Outcomes

- Several thousand preventive health interventions since 2001
- High-consequence pathogens (e.g. malaria, tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV) and GI parasites diagnosed and treated; vision corrected
- Access to otherwise unavailable specialty medical services for clinical care
- Heightened awareness of how behaviors at home and work affect health

Gorilla Doctors Employee Health Program

Following sensitization and consent, park workers receive annually:

- Physical examinations by a physician
- Routine screening and diagnostics
- Referral for clinical care and treatment
- Immunizations if/as needed

On a quarterly basis park workers *and their spouses and children* receive:

- Anthelmintic treatment
- Health and hygiene education

Challenges

- Data management
- Consistent application of protocols
- Processes for referral
- Communications
- Co-management



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